



Merck Project XL

Introduction

As part of former President Clinton's initiatives for reinventing government, Project XL (the eXcellence and Leadership Program) was introduced in 1995. The program provided opportunities to engage in novel ways of achieving environmental progress outside of the constraints normally invoked by regulations. Project XL is managed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Merck and Co., Inc. is a worldwide health products manufacturing company focused on both human and animal health products. Merck's only domestic manufacturing facility is the Stonewall Plant located near Elkton, Virginia. It employs approximately 800 people and produces antibiotics, anti-parasitic drugs, anti-inflammatory drugs, cholesterol-lowering drugs, and so forth.

The Environmental Protection Agency, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the National Park Service, Merck, and the local community joined forces in 1996 to develop a simplified air permit for the Stonewall pharmaceutical manufacturing facility. Under the auspices of Project XL and this permit, Merck would reduce total air emissions for criteria pollutants but have the flexibility to make changes to operations and manufacturing without seeking further approvals.

The air permit was issued in 1998 and plant conversions were completed in 2000. 2005 is the first anniversary for project review by stakeholders.



EPA Project XL logo.

Management Needs

The Stonewall Plant in Elkton, Virginia is located near Shenandoah National Park. Given the history of air quality related issues at the park and resource impacts that have occurred, it was imperative that the National Park Service be involved with emissions permit review and Project XL development.



Merck Stonewall Plant sign, Elkton, VA.

Current Activities

Air permits issued for the Stonewall Plant prior to Project XL set allowable pollutant emissions at 2,700 tons per year and past actual emissions were at 1,503 tons per year. Negotiations under Project XL resulted in a new permit with emissions set at 1,202 allowable tons per year. During the 12-month period ending December 31, 2004, actual total emissions were 132 tons per year. Clearly substantial improvements in emission reductions have occurred. Much of the reduction is attributable to conversion from coal combustion to natural gas and oil combustion.

The permit provides an opportunity for stakeholders to review the project every five years with 2005 being the first anniversary for review. That review will probably take place during the summer months and will involve the National Park Service as a stakeholder.

Additional information on Merck's Project XL and other projects supported by the Environmental Protection Agency can be found at:

<http://www.epa.gov/projectxl/merck/index.htm>